

Good morning members of the board. Today I would like to discuss importance of civic engagement in high school students. In our world today, students seem to be reading less and less from traditional news sources and getting more and more information from social media outlets, many of which circulate misleading news content which significantly affects public opinion. In a world where people are beginning to value quick information on current events over the correct, detailed, and complex stories that these events often are, a greater amount of the public is making uninformed choices and statements in their civic engagement. To further aggravate the problem, television news sources are becoming increasingly partisan and reporting on topics that “bring in ratings,” neglecting the full spectrum of the news in areas such as scientific research, economic policy and the corporate world, and international relations (outside the scope of the US involvement). Our public is so misinformed that we are known as the stupid Americans who are self-absorbed and know nothing of what happens outside our own country and sometimes know nothing of what is happening in our own communities.

This, I feel, is a blaring fault in our education system that must be rectified. Students must be engaged, informed, and equipped to properly make sense of the media that they are exposed to. One of the most important skills in gathering news and being informed that I believe has been neglected is reading the newspaper. Although we sometimes report on current events in our class, this sort of engagement and research is not nearly frequent enough for students to gain a proper understanding of the world around them: being engaged with the news must become a habit. Reading and comprehending articles must become a skill that each and every person in the community should be comfortable with, as it is used very often in the job market as well. In schools, we should encourage such reading, especially from newspapers that are credited with

generally high journalistic standards such as the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal.

Although high school students are generally not eligible for discounts on subscriptions to these news sources, they are generally affordable (especially on electronic devices), with subscriptions under \$5 per week. There are also programs, such as NYTimes In School, that provide subscriptions to school districts at special affordable rates, providing students with a valuable resource during the school year. In fact, in addition to digital subscriptions, the New York Times has launched a Learning Network with features for schools such as short essay prompts, lesson plans for all areas including the Common Core, quizzes, and competitions. High schools in New Jersey have already implemented this program. Teachers from High Technology High School state:

“Using the newspapers as a daily part of our humanities class has revolutionized our teaching. Over the course of the school year, our ninth graders have grown into informed citizens who are able to think critically and empathetically about issues facing the world, from genetically modified plants to the efforts to rebuild after natural disasters.

Athletes know the only way to get better is to practice. We approach reading and writing the same way. By adopting The Times and our local paper, The Asbury Park Press, as part of our daily routine, we are able to meet all of the standards in reading and writing without sacrificing history content or English literature. Newspapers enhance our classroom, complementing the curriculum already in place. They also open our classroom to the world outside.”

It is important to take steps towards the ultimate goal of having a well informed and competitive student body in our state. We must continue to work towards encouraging increased readership of credited news sources so students can work on critical reading skills and be more globally aware, preparing them for what lies ahead.